

TESTIMONY FOR HB 349

LEWIS & CLARK HUMANE SOCIETY
TYLER KECHELY, DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR
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My name is Tyler Kechely and I am representing the Lewis & Clark Humane Society and Executive Director, Gina Wiest.

I am here in support of HB 349. Animal Cruelty is, unfortunately, becoming more common throughout the country and even in our own backyard. The Lewis & Clark Humane Society (LCHS) receives cruelty or animal welfare complaints on a regular basis. Most of these complaints are addressed through education of the pet owner on animal care requirements. LCHS has also dealt with some very severe cruelty cases. The common thread from these cases is the cost involved in maintaining the animals during the legal process, the length of time for the legal process and that an entire community can be impacted.

In October of 1998, 53 mixed breed dogs were confined in an abandoned Silver City warehouse without food and water. The health of the animals was moderate to severely compromised as assessed by a veterinarian, at the time of seizure. These animals were unsocialized and took over a year to be placed into homes. The shelter diligently worked with and trained these dogs so that they would make good pets. Out of pocket expenses by LCHS was in the neighborhood of \$50,000. The gentleman who owned these dogs, moved to the Libby area and began again. By the time he was caught he had 27 dogs.

In October of 2002, 180+ Collies were stopped at the Canadian border. The condition of these dogs was horrendous. They were dirty, sick, malnourished and unsocialized. This was also a long term case and required many volunteer hours and resources from the community.

Most recently, Camp Husky in Butte, with 100 adult dogs and by the time the females had their litters is was 160+. These dogs too, were unsocialized and their health was at risk. The cost to the Butte community has been huge.

We have had people find animals in apartments that have been abandoned. One such case was brought to us with two 60 pound dogs stuffed into a medium size kennel designed to hold at most a 35 or 40 pound dog. The hair and skin had been burned away due to the amount of urine in the kennel not to mention the feces that was in the kennel as well.

We have kittens arrive every season with road rash on their little bodies from being thrown out a car window. And most recently, the cats that were killed by three young men in our Helena community, this summer. These cats were hunted down and systematically tortured and killed. Had there not been other charges against these men they would have faced only two years under the current aggravated cruelty law. Two years!!!! The emotional toll the families had to deal with was overwhelming as was the horror from the Helena community.

Animal abuse and human abuse go hand in hand. They are both forms of domestic violence. There is a link to those people who abuse animals being more likely to abuse humans. Animal abuse often precedes human abuse. Studies have found that 75% of inmates charged with violent crimes also had a history of cruelty to animals. 38% of violent criminals in a federal prison admitted to animal cruelty.

Serial killers who began by killing animals: David Berkowitz (Son of Sam), Ted Bundy, Jeffrey Dahmer, Nathaniel Bar Jonah, and Albert DeSalve better known as the Boston Strangler. Those are just a few, there are many more. Not all children who abuse animals will grow to become violent adults, but a strong correlation does appear to exist between cruelty to animals and violence against humans or domestic violence.

An important component of HB 349 is ordering counseling for an offender for a second or subsequent offense of cruelty to animals or a first or subsequent

offense of aggravated animal cruelty. This is an important first step in stopping the cycle of violence between animals and humans.

Please support HB 349!

Violence Against Animals and Humans □ The Link Personified

- David Berkowitz □ also known as the Son of Sam killer, killed a neighbor's dog, which he claimed had told him to commit murder.
- Ted Bundy □ well known serial killer of perhaps as many as 40 women. As a child he spent time with his grandfather who was known to torment animals. Bundy admitted to killing animals when young, before killing women.
- Carroll Cole □ executed for 5 murders and suspected of 30 more. Admitted that his first murder was the strangulation of a puppy.
- Jeffrey Dahmer □ imprisoned for killing, mutilating, and occasionally eating 17 men. When young, he was fascinated with dead animals and often practiced taxidermy on roadkill. He was known to have impaled the heads of animals he had killed on stakes in his yard. Neighbors were disgusted, but never reported this to animal welfare or social services.
- Richard Davis □ imprisoned for the murder of Polly Klaas. As a youngster he had set cats on fire and laughed when his own dog broke its neck and died while chasing a boulder he had pushed down a hill.
- Albert DeSalvo □ also known as the Boston Strangler, killed 13 women. As a youth, he had trapped dogs and cats in orange crates and shot arrows through the boxes for fun.
- Edmund Kemper □ convicted of killing 8 women including his mother. Admitted to a history of torturing dogs and cats.
- Shawn Novak □ at age 15, sentenced to life in prison for slashing the throats of two young boys. Only after he was accused of the murders, schoolmates and neighbors reported that he wore a cat's paw on a necklace, bragged about killing animals, and showed them dead birds, cat heads, and animal bones.
- Patrick Sherrill □ killed 14 co-workers before committing suicide. He was known to have stolen the pets of neighbors and given them to his dog to kill and mutilate.
- Earl Shriner □ imprisoned for sexually mutilating a young boy. Admitted to hanging cats, slaughtering chickens, and sticking firecrackers in the anuses of dogs.
- Eric Smith □ at the young age of 13, beat a four-year-old neighbor to death. Four years earlier, he had choked his neighbor's cat to death with a hose clamp.
- Bobby Thompson □ at age 11, kidnapped and killed a two-year-old boy. He was found to have shot pigeons with a BB gun and cut off their heads while still alive. He also placed a kitten on a railroad track to watch it be cut in half by an oncoming train.

Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence

Domestic violence refers to a wide variety of behaviors used by individuals to exert power and control, through fear and intimidation, over their intimate partners, former partners, or family members. Domestic violence or battering includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, psychological abuse, and any other tactics employed to reinforce control over the victim.

An animal in a family's home may serve as a barometer of domestic violence experienced within. Spotting animal abuse may be easier for neighbors because animals are often outside and without covering, such as clothing, making abusive injuries and neglect easier to identify. Animals also are more likely to howl when hurt, thereby alerting neighbors. Additionally, people are more willing to report animal abuse than child abuse, often deciding that interfering with someone else's children is inappropriate.

Most pet owners consider their animals to be family members, and have a strong bond with them. Because batterers often harm or destroy things that their victims hold dear, animals become targets for abuse.

- Pets are beaten or killed in order to coerce or intimidate the victim with the message ☐ you could be next. ☐
- Batterers may coerce children into silence regarding sexual abuse, with threats to kill their pets.
- Batterers may threaten to have a pet euthanized or sent to the shelter in order to punish victims.
- Batterers have engaged in bestiality or forced victims to engage in bestiality as a form of humiliation.
- Children sometimes abuse animals as a result of ☐pecking order☐ violence, where they will abuse a living being that is smaller than themselves just as they have been abused by an adult.
- Pet neglect is less predictive of violence but may still be evidence that social services are needed in the home. Neglect can also be the beginning ☐ batterers have been known to neglect pets or refuse to let them have food as a way of punishing others.
- Sometimes pets simply disappear.

When children are abused and exposed to domestic violence, they may become abusers themselves. Twenty-three percent of youths in the juvenile justice system reported torturing or hurting animals in the past year. Children may act out the abuse they see adults committing or they may re-enact abuses they have suffered themselves. Some children have been known to practice their own suicide through killing an animal. Others have admitted to killing their pets in a more humane way rather than allow them to suffer at the hands of a batterer.

Several studies have found that men who abuse their wives are more likely to abuse their children and household pets. Ascione (1998) found that forty percent of women who visited domestic violence shelters reported that their batterers had also abused their pets. Others have found that on average, 76% of abused women with pets report that their pets are abused by the batterer. Twenty-eight percent reported that their children were abusing the animals as well.

As with children, a neglected or abused animal can draw attention to a hidden abuse or neglected elder. Often an elderly victim would never venture outdoors and has no visitors making them unnoticed victims. An abused pet will be a red flag that help is needed inside. In cases such as these, animals make the ultimate sacrifice in leading their families to intervention.

Clearly, animal abuse often coexists with domestic violence and in many cases is a precursor to violence against humans. In short, where we find animal abuse, we are also likely to find human abuse or domestic violence. If those suspected of animal abuse can be checked for domestic violence, perhaps this cycle of violence can be interrupted.

Similarities Between Animal & Human Abuse

There are many similarities between animal abuse and human abuse or domestic violence, weaving the two issues into a braid of consequences.

- **Power and control; preying on those more vulnerable** - Both animals and humans are victimized as batterers struggle to gain power and control over those more vulnerable than themselves.
- **Risk of physical and psychological injury** - Both animals and humans suffer extreme physical and psychological abuse at the hands of batterers.
- **Unexplained bruises, welts, cuts, marks** - Both animal and human victims will exhibit physical signs of abuse that the batterer will neglect or refuse to explain.
- **Behavior changes such as regression, relapses in training** - Both animals and children can exhibit behavior changes. Children may regress or revert to an earlier stage of childhood, exhibiting behaviors they have currently outgrown. Animals can experience much the same changes and revert to defecating in the house.
- **Failure to thrive, withdrawing, passive** - Both animals and humans can fail to thrive or remain small, shy, and sickly.
- **Hostile to others, untrusting** - Both animals and humans can become aggressive towards others as a defensive response to abuse.
- **Desperate to please anyone showing kindness** - Both animals and humans can display this type of behavior in their search for love and affection.
- **May still show love for abuser** - Surprisingly, both animals and humans may be determined to please those who abuse them and will continue to demonstrate love and affection for them. Children often claim to love the very parents who have severely abused them and pets will often remain loyal to an owner that has mistreated them.
- **Running away** - On the other side of the coin, both animals and humans may run from their abuser and are often found in a physically and emotionally battered state requiring assistance.

STATISTIC
<i>Sadistic behavior towards humans was found in 32% of youths who had records of cruelty to animals, compared with 12% for a comparable group of youths who did not.</i>

Mary Ellen

The often told and well-known story of Mary Ellen, the first American child legally rescued from abuse, is an important reminder of the contributions animal protection agencies have made to the fight against child abuse.

Mary Ellen was a nine-year-old girl living in New York City in 1875 with abusive adoptive parents who beat her, tortured her, and cut her with scissors on a regular basis. When a concerned citizen was unable to get help from various public agencies to have Mary Ellen removed from the home, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) stepped in.

Current animal cruelty laws, which had been in effect for centuries, provided protection against unnecessary cruelty, abuse, and neglect of domesticated animals. Using the rationale that Mary Ellen was a member of the animal kingdom, the ASPCA was successful in persuading the court that she deserved as much protection as any helpless or defenseless animal would.

Mary Ellen was removed from the home and the ASPCA initiated the enactment of new legislation to protect children from abuse and neglect.

Cooperation

Now that the link between animal abuse and domestic violence has been identified, more and more efforts are being launched to address the issue. In Nashville, TN a new policy requires police officers on domestic violence calls to obtain animal abuse information as a lethality factor and batterers meeting this criterion are remanded to treatment. Since its inception, domestic violence fatalities have dropped dramatically.

It is also important to note that removing the victim of abuse (animal or human) may only cause another family member to be targeted. If the animal is removed without intervention for the children, they may become the next victims, and vice versa. Working together is the only way to ensure safety for all family members.

A disturbing trend in recent years is the competition between animal and human abuse agencies for funding, publicity, and recognition. However, working together, animal abuse and domestic violence professionals can become a stronger force in the fight against violence. Together we can

- ☐ inform each other,
- ☐ learn from each other,
- ☐ refer clients to each other,
- ☐ support each other,
- ☐ cross train each other, and
- ☐ secure more funding, publicity and recognition!